

Claims

1. A method of controlling call admission within a system comprising a plurality of media gateways interconnected by a packet switched backbone, the method comprising the steps of:
 - at at least one media gateway, monitoring the level of congestion suffered by incoming packets to that gateway from other media gateways or groups of media gateways over said backbone; and
 - following receipt of a request for said at least one media gateway to terminate a bearer extending over said backbone from a "peer" media gateway, making a decision on the admissibility of that request based upon the previously monitored level of congestion suffered by incoming packets from that peer media gateway or a group of media gateways containing the peer gateway.
- 15 2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the step of monitoring the level of congestion suffered by incoming packets to a gateway comprises examining packets received at that gateway to determine whether or not they contain a congestion notification flag.
- 20 3. A method according to claim 1 or 2, the step of monitoring the level of congestion suffered by incoming packets to a gateway comprising monitoring the rate at which packets are dropped.
- 25 4. A method according to claim 3 when appended to claim 2, the step of monitoring the level of congestion suffered by incoming packets to a gateway comprising monitoring the rate at which packets are dropped by the backbone and examining packets received at that gateway to determine whether or not they contain a congestion notification flag.
- 30 5. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the step of monitoring the level of congestion suffered by incoming packets to a gateway comprises associating incoming packets or packet sequences with an originating gateway based upon source addresses or parts of source addresses.

6. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said packet switched backbone is an Internet Protocol (IP) backbone.

5 7. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said step of making a decision on the admissibility of a request for a media gateway to terminate a bearer, comprises making that decision at the media gateway.

10 8. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the decision on the admissibility of a request for a media gateway to terminate a bearer is made at the media gateway controller controlling said at least one media gateway, and monitored congestion levels are signalled to the media gateway controller by the media gateway.

15 9. A media gateway arranged to control call admission within a system comprising a plurality of media gateways interconnected by a packet switched backbone, the media gateway comprising:

means for monitoring the level of congestion suffered by incoming packets to that gateway from other media gateways or groups of media gateways over said backbone;

20 means for receiving a request for that media gateway to terminate a bearer extending over said backbone from a "peer" media gateway; and

means coupled to the monitoring means and the receiving means for making a decision on the admissibility of that request based upon the previously monitored level of congestion suffered by incoming packets from that peer media gateway or a group of media gateways containing the peer gateway.

25 10. A media gateway controller arranged to control call admission within a system comprising a plurality of media gateways interconnected by a packet switched backbone, the media gateway controller comprising:

30 an interface towards at least one media gateway;

means for receiving monitored congestion levels from the or each media gateway to which it has an interface, the monitored congestion levels being indicative of

the congestion suffered by incoming packets to the or respective gateways from other media gateways or groups of media gateways over said backbone;

means for receiving a call request requiring that a media gateway terminate a bearer extending over said backbone from a "peer" media gateway; and

5 means coupled to both the receiving means for making a decision on the admissibility of that request based upon the congestion level suffered by incoming packets from that peer media gateway or a group of media gateways containing the peer gateway.

10 11. A computer program storage medium having stored thereon a computer program for causing a media gateway to operate in accordance with the method of any one of claims 1 to 8.

15 12. A computer program storage medium having stored thereon a computer program for causing a media gateway controller to operate in accordance with the method of any one of claims 1 to 8.